

Dear Students,

Hello, and my name is Jeanelle Agyem, one of your Student Member of the Board candidates. I'd like to start with thanking everyone that is here today as well as all of my supporters. Not only am I very excited to be here in front of you all but very blessed to be given this opportunity as well. With that being said I hope that everyone is interested in what I have to say for the next 3 minutes!

I'd like to start off with talking about a little statistic, 1 in 5. 1 in 5 teenagers in the U.S. currently report suffering from mental health issues, a statistic that has greatly grown during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within our generation, mental health awareness has become one of the most important topics, and importantly so. Mental health impacts every aspect of life: home, relationships, and school, to name a few. If mental health is not our number one focus, then how can we effectively help our students thrive now and in the future? This is why the first point of my platform focuses on greater student involvement in the decisions behind mental health aids and practices our county conducts. Students should be involved in educational system topics, such as mental health, that have a large impact on them and their lives. Through this, I would push for the creation of a board of students that give valuable suggestions on mental health policies that are put in place, as well as give responses to how effective and helpful these policies are. Through this, I hope that greater student involvement can help us tackle bettering the mental health of our student body in an effective way, through a system where students have a greater say in policies that involve them.

Over the course of the past few months, there have been national talks on racism and the extent that our nation's past actions have impacted present day race-relations. As a county, we should continue our efforts to be more inclusive to our minority students and teach our students about anti-racism. If we wish for our county to be as diverse as possible, then that process needs to start in the classroom. Through this, one of my policy points is to have more discussion on adding cultural and racial diversity aspects and events into our curriculum and school system so that we can better teach our students to respect and care for each other regardless of race or ethnicity, and to ensure that our minority students have the support they need.

One of the overarching changes between this year and years past is that currently we are all learning at home in a virtual school setting. In normal circumstances, I would be talking to you all in person rather than through Google Meet. With this, there have been recent talks of moving towards a hybrid model in the Spring. While this is still up in the air, on the chance that a hybrid model becomes implemented, one of my points is providing greater support and planning through this difficult transition. We have been in quarantine for roughly 9 months, a change that has drastically changed everyone's lives. My plan is to provide greater support if we move towards in-person school for students, families, and teachers, as well as strict criteria to ensure that CDC guidelines are being met if we ever do see each other in a normal school setting again.

Improving access to technology in our school systems has been a long-term goal and passion of mine. I truly believe that with more technology in our school system, we can better help our students be prepared for the ever-growing technological future, as well as use this technology to implement new ways of teaching that are scientifically proven to better help students learn. Especially with the chance that we possibly return to school, technology will be

more important than ever to create a balance with hybrid students and virtual students. By increasing the funding for this, we can implement better projectors, cameras, and possibly even smartboards for more of our schools so that students can learn better and teachers have an easier time teaching.

Lastly, my final platform point is to have greater student involvement in what goes on in the FCPS system. While SMOBs are supposed to be representative of all the students in the county, many students feel like our county is not fully representative of them, like there is a great disconnect between FCPS and the student body. This leads me to my final point, which is to quite simply create a bridge for that barrier, by promoting and reserving time for student testimony on BOE topics at the meetings during public comment, at their discretion. That way, students can truly voice their opinions in a constructive way and the BOE can get a more diversified view of what matters to students and actions they want to see taken to improve our system.

I truly believe that during this difficult time, we can come together to still make FCPS the best that it can be. I hope that throughout this campaign, I can convey to you all my passion and devotion to the students of FCPS. I applied for, and am now running for, the position of SMOB because my first and foremost goal was always to be someone who can represent the student voices, the voices of those who want to see change, the voices of those who are unhappy and simply want things to be better, and the voices that are scared to speak up. I want to hear all of your voices, I want to listen to you, and I want to be your next Student Member of the Board. Thank you.